DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 107 359 PS 007 868

AUTHOR Hawkes, Glenn R.; And Others
TITLE Patterns of Living in California's Migrant Labor Families. Research Monograph No. 12.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Davis. Dept. of Applied Behavioral Sciences.
PUB DATE Aug 73
NOTE 33p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Disadvantaged Groups; *Family Characteristics; Income; Interviews; *Mexican Americans; Migrant Problems; *Migrant Workers; Parent Child Relationship; Participant Characteristics; *Poverty Research; *Sociocultural Patterns; Values

ABSTRACT

This report presents a study of the living patterns of California's migrant labor families, one part of a national study on the identification of life patterns among relatively disadvantaged families. Data were collected from 169 interviews with homemakers randomly selected from 12 state-owned migrant camps in California. The interviews consisted of fixed-alternative questions in the following areas: (1) neighboring practices (social interaction); (2) income index; (3) steadiness of income; (4) kinship orientation; (5) family orientation; (6) family cohesiveness; (7) parental permissiveness; (8) marital satisfaction; and (9) value orientations to education and employment. Some general findings in each of these areas are examined. (ED)

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"PATTERNS OF LIVING IN CALIFORNIA'S MIGRANT LABOR FAMILIES"

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Research Monograph No. 12

August 1973

PS 007 868

Based on data collected from migrant families for North Central Regional Research Project "Patterns of Living in Disadvantaged Families" funded by the University of California Agricultural Experiment Station. (NC-90)

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FOREWARD

In the decades of the sixties and seventies much concern has been shown for the plight of the disadvantaged in our "affluent society." Local, state, and federal programs have been developed to reduce the restrictive economic and social circumstances which have produced and perpetuated this gross contradiction of the American dream. These programs, in many cases, have failed to achieve their goals. These failures are often a product of our lack of understanding of the restraining conditions of the poverty environment.

The identification of life patterns among relatively disadvantaged families in selected areas of the nation was the major objective of a national study of which this is a part. Thirteen states representing Vermont to Hawaii and Ohio to Texas participated. California, as a participating state, chose to study patterns of living in migrant labor families. This is a report of those families.

We have chosen this type of publication in order to make the information available to the diverse groups who have an interest and a stake in the welfare of migrant families. Researchers, extension workers, educators, public officials and policy makers, planners, welfare and similar assistance organizations, mass media and private citizens all need more and better information about the patterns of living of these families. Additional information on the interview schedule and its development can be found by referring to the basebook Patterns of Living in Disadvantaged Families Related to Income Poverty published by the Iowa State University Press in Ames, Iowa.

Our gratitude to the subject families is great. We extend our sincere thanks to the camp officials and the interviewers for their help. Mr. Ralph Gunderson, Chief, Migrant Services for the State of California assisted us materially. To our colleagues in the national project we are very beholden. This has been a team effort and everyone contributed his full measure.

Introduction

Since the turn of the century the traditional yeoman farmer who tills his own land has been disappearing in America. Across the country the family farm is deserted for greener pastures in the city. Replacing the yeoman are giant corporate farms comprising hundreds of acres, resembling industrial corporations and frequently linked with them.

The corporate farm has meant the development of new work relations. No longer do the farmer and his hired hand work together in tilling the land; instead, foremen supervise hundreds of laborers. And because farm work is seasonal these laborers are hired only for short periods and move on from crop to crop.

In California the institution of migrant labor has existed for nearly 100 years. The reason is that the yeoman farmer hardly existed in California. From the beginning the land was parceled out in huge areas to a few people. The homesteaders never had a chance. Because there were few small farmers there were few people living on the land, and California growers came early to depend on migrant labor.

Each new wave of immigration brought new groups to the fields. Chinese, brought over to build the first transcontinental railroad, moved into the fields when the railroad was finished. Next came the Japanese, who transformed themselves from laborers to owners and were replaced by the Hindustani, who in turn were replaced by Mexicans. The first big "Mexican harvest," as it was called, took place in 1920. For a short period during the depression of the 1930's, the Mexicans were joined by native Americans from the dustbowl areas of Oklahoma and Arkansas. Today most of the families traveling from field to field during the growing season are Mexican or of Mexican origins.

Although most of our food is harvested by migrants, the migrants themselves have remained almost invisible--probably for many reasons: the difficulty in contacting people who are always on the move, prejudice, the language barrier, and a desire not to know any distressing facts. All up and down the central valley of California the migrants harvest the crops. But these migrants are rarely seen by the casual passerby. The camps in which they live are far from the main roads, and the migrants themselves frequently are not welcome in the towns. Poverty is ugly; life is more pleasant when it is not seen. A truly satisfactory migrant labor force should appear miraculously when needed and evaporate when all the crops are harvested. Anything less than invisibility is likely to embarrass those who benefit from the present system.

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Because of their invisibility, little is known about those entangled in the net of migrant labor; and much of what is known is anecdotal. This leaves a great deal of room for prejudice and bias to slip into one's thinking. The present study was done to help fill this gap of ignorance and prejudice surrounding one of California's most pervasive and enduring institutions.

This institution requires greater understanding now because of the important changes in agriculture in the last 10 years. To begin with, increased mechanization has eliminated many of the hand jobs in agriculture while creating more skilled jobs. Secondly, the Congress did not extend the bracero program, PL 78, in 1963. This ended the importation of Mexican nationals to work in the fields on a short-term basis. From 1942 to 1964, braceros constituted the majority of California's farm workers. Now farm owners must and do rely on domestic labor. A farmer cannot import labor unless he can prove to the Department of Labor that he has exhausted all existing sources of domestic farm labor. Thirdly, farm laborers have begun to unionize. This movement is due at least partially to the first two changes.

All of these changes signal and create a need for new policies. Such policies cannot be formulated without knowledge about the people who make up this labor force. This study provides some of the necessary information. It is concerned with the families whose livelihood comes from farm labor, and attempts to answer such questions as: Who are these people? What do they believe? How are their lives molded and shaped by the work that they do?

The data presented here are a part of a larger project. Poverty populations were studied in thirteen states (California, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Nevada, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, and Vermont). These populations ranged from rural farm to rural nonfarm to urban.* This larger project aimed at discovering the patterns of living among disadvantaged families. Participants in each of the thirteen states used the same interviewing schedule, and within the populations sampled they interviewed the same type of respondents from the same type of household (the section on sampling gives details on what constituted eligible respondents). California's contribution to this project was a study of migrant families. Data from the

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*For a more detailed description of each of the 12 populations sampled, exclusive of California, see Appendix A.

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entire project cannot be summarized here although some findings from other states are presented for comparisons.

Design and Procedures--the Sample

Those interviewed were randomly selected homemakers of migrant-labor families living in 12 state-owned migrant camps in California. State-owned camps were chosen for several reasons: 1) The camps house approximately a fifth of the agricultural workers and families in California; 2) applicants for residence are required to have an income below the Poverty Guideline established by the U.S. government; and 3) the camps are nearly always full, with approximately 2,550 families passing through their gates in the previous year. The researchers were thus insured a large and accessible population of migrant farm laborer families. Camps owned and operated by the farmers themselves were excluded because access was difficult.

Of the twenty-six possible camps, twelve were selected* because: 1) They constitute a continuous geographic and agricultural unit; 2) they were in operation over a period coinciding with the projected schedule of the research; 3) the resident population was large enough to maximize efficiency in data-gathering; and 4) they were within one day's commuting distance from the research center at the University of California at Davis.

Housing units in each of the camps were selected randomly. Interviews were conducted with the homemaker in each of the selected units if that homemaker was eligible to be a respondent. To qualify as a respondent a homemaker had to be a female aged 19 to 65 and responsible for at least one child under the age of 18. A woman of 18 or less could qualify as a respondent if she was the mother of one of the children in the family.

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*The twelve camps selected and their locations are as follows:

CAMP	COUNTY
Dixon	Solano
Empire	Stanislaus
Gilroy	Santa Clara
Harney Lane	San Joaquin
Hollister	San Benito
King City	Monterey
Livingston	Merced
Mathews 2	San Joaquin
Mathews 3	San Joaquin
Patterson	Stanislaus
Westley	Stanislaus
Yuba City	Sutter

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To eliminate any selectivity or bias, interviewers were instructed to obtain interviews only from the list of randomly selected housing units, and only in the order listed. The interviews were conducted almost simultaneously in each of the 12 camps from Sept. 15 through Nov. 15, 1971. Interviewers contacted 235 housing units. Of these, thirty-one were vacant, the residents of another twenty-one were ineligible, and the residents in an additional fourteen units refused to participate. The result was 169 usable interviews.

Design and Procedures--Interview and Interviewer

The data were gathered in interviews with the homemakers. The interview consisted of fixed-alternative questions, i.e., questions in which the respondent had to choose her answer from a few preselected alternatives.

Because many in the population studied did not speak English, a special bilingual form was prepared of the common interview schedule used by all thirteen states, and interviewers were selected from the migrant camps themselves. Besides improving communication, it was hoped that bilingual interviewers of the same sex, class, and ethnic origins as the respondents would gain increased rapport, and thereby increased frankness and honesty.

Camp managers at each of the twelve camps were asked to select as interviewers one or two women in the camp who were literate in both Spanish and English, were known to the residents of the camp, had free time in the evenings or late afternoons when respondents would most likely be available, and were trustworthy and not prone to gossip. In all, seventeen women were selected to conduct interviews in the camps. Each was trained to use both the interview schedule and the list of the randomly selected housing units. Frequent visits and telephone calls by the supervisor, where possible, kept tabs on the data-collection. Interviewers were paid four dollars for each usable interview. Respondents also were paid four dollars, to promote cooperation and compensate for their time.

Scales and Measures

Measures of several attributes were constructed from the questions on the interview schedule. Many of the questions used to construct these scales were adapted from scales used previously by other investigators. The final measures retained only the questions which discriminated between groups according to data from all thirteen states. The measures used in this report are described below. The reader may wish to merely skim this section now and later come back to each measure as he reads about it in the findings of this report.

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1) Neighboring Practices

The social interaction of the respondent with her neighbors was measured by the answers to three questions: a) Do you and any of your neighbors go shopping or do other things together? b) Do you and any of your neighbors borrow things from each other, take care of each other's children, or do other favors for each other? c) How much time would you say you spent visiting, or chatting with neighbors or friends on an average weekday? _____ hours.

The alternative responses to the first two questions were: often, sometimes, seldom, and never. Because the first question was considerably more discriminating than the second item, positive responses to the first item were weighted more heavily (i.e., 6, often; 4, sometimes) for the first item than for the second item (4, often; 3, sometimes). The weighted score of the first item was added to the score on the second item. No score was derived if either of these 2 items were unanswered. An additional point was added to a respondent's score if her visiting time with neighbors exceeded the mean time (1.14 hours) for all twelve states (lacking California, which had not yet been surveyed). Finally, the neighboring scores were coded as low, moderate, or high.

2) Income Index

The income index is a tool for grouping families with roughly the same financial well-being. Such an index was needed since families vary in size, in composition (age and sex of members), and in place of residence. Any differences in these factors could mean differing financial well-being despite exactly equal incomes. Obviously, $3,000 a year can go farther with a family of two than with a family of six. The income index measures how far each family's reported income in the survey year diverges from the level needed to provide a minimumly adequate living to a family of that size, composition, and place of residence.

The bases for the index were the poverty thresholds developed by the Social Security Administration of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and used by the Bureau of the Census in its annual estimates of the number of persons and families in poverty.* Since the poverty thresholds established by the U.S. government are based on average costs across the nation, and do not discriminate among larger families, they

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*Published in the Census Bureau's Current Population Reports, Series P-60 on Consumer Income.

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were modified for our purposes to differentiate more accurately between large families and to take account of regional price differences. Thus, different poverty-thresholds were created for different regions (such as the West Coast and the South) as well as for differences in family size and composition. The income index permits the comparison of different families since it is a measure of the distance between each family's reported income and the poverty threshold for a family of that size and composition, living in that region.

An income index of 100 is equal to the poverty threshold when this threshold is based on the economy food plan of the USDA (a food plan designed for emergency situations, not for long-term use). A family with an index of less than 100 would be living in poverty even by this strict emergency food plan, and would ordinarily have great difficulty in obtaining even a minimumly adequate living. An income index of 125 would be the poverty threshold if the threshold was based on the low-cost food plan of the USDA since the economy food plan above is approximately 80 percent of the low-cost food plan. Neither of these scores means that a family is well-off. They are both poverty thresholds.

3) Steadiness of Income

Respondents were asked to look back at all the sources of income for the previous 12 months and to describe how dependable the income was. The answers were coded by the interviewer as: a) not dependable at all; b) received regularly but the amount varying greatly; c) dependable part but not all of the year; d) a regular dependable part plus a fluctuating amount above that; and e) steady. The data were recoded by retaining the category "income not at all dependable," collapsing the next three categories (b, c, and d) into a category called "fluctuating," and reexamining income classified as steady by going back to the questionnaire for each family's employment and earnings data. A steady income was also recoded as "fluctuating" if an earner worked for less than 48 weeks, a second earner in the family was employed only part-time during the year, or if an earner held two or more jobs sequentially with more than a 10 percent difference in weekly pay between them. All other income was classified as "steady." This means that income was classified as "steady," "fluctuating," or "not at all dependable."

4) Kinship Orientation

Four items were used to determine a respondent's feelings of closeness to her kin: a) I get help from relatives more than from people not related to me; b) I give help

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to relatives more than to people not related to me; c) I talk about problems more with relatives than with people not related to me; d) I spend more time with relatives than with people not related to me. The term "relatives" in these questions was defined as "relatives within visiting distance (go and return the same day)."

All the items could be answered either "yes" or "no". A respondent's score was the sum of her positive responses to the four items (1 for every "yes" and 0 for every "no"). No score was derived if any of the items were not answered. The possible total scores were then classified as follows:

Score of 0 = no kinship orientation
Score of 1 = low kinship orientation
Score of 2 = moderately low kinship orientation
Score of 3 = moderately high kinship orientation
Score of 4 = high kinship orientation.

5) Family Orientation

Since the geographical distance between relatives does not necessarily result in the loss of an extended family orientation, four items were used to determine whether a respondent had an extended or a nonextended family orientation. Respondents were permitted an "uncertain" response as well as a positive ("important to me") and a negative ("not important to me") response. The four items were: a) Generally, I like our family to spend evenings together; b) I want a house where our family can spend time together; c) I want a location which would make it easy for relatives to get together; d) I want a house with enough room so our parents could move in with us if they wanted to.

The scoring procedure was as follows: Respondents who answered the first or second items positively, but not the third or fourth items, were classified as having a nuclear family orientation. Individuals who answered the third or fourth items positively, regardless of their responses on the first and second items, were classified as having an extended family orientation. Individuals who answered none of the items positively were classified as having a nonfamily orientation. If a respondent failed to answer any one of the four items, no family orientation was determined for that person.

6) Family Cohesiveness

Family cohesiveness was measured by two items indicating the degree of family joint participation in various activities: a) How often do you go places together as a family? b) How often do family members work around the home together? Respondents could answer each item with: often (= 4), sometimes (= 3), seldom (= 2), never (= 1).

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The score for family cohesiveness equals the sum of the responses to the two items. If a family often went places together and often worked around the same home together, it received a rating of high family cohesiveness (the total score = 8). Less frequent participation was classified as either medium cohesiveness (scores of 5-7) or low cohesiveness (scores of 2-4).

7) Parental Permissiveness

A parental permissiveness score was constructed from five items which represent ideas about being a parent: a) Most children should be toilet trained by 15 months of age; b) children should be nicer than they are to their mothers since their mothers suffer so much for them; c) most children should be spanked more often; d) a child should be taken away from the breast or bottle as soon as possible; e) the main goal of a parent is to see that the children stay out of trouble. The possible responses were strongly disagree (= 1), disagree (= 2), agree (= 3), and strongly agree (= 4). The parental permissiveness score is the summation of the values of the respondents' answers to each item. The range of possible scores is 5 to 25. These scores were grouped into three categories: permissive (scores of 5-10), mixed (scores of 11-19), and nonpermissive (scores of 20-25).

8) Marital Satisfaction

The wife's degree of satisfaction with her husband in selected areas of interaction and communication was measured by four items: a) How satisfied are you with your husband's understanding of your problems and feelings? b) How satisfied are you with the attention you receive from your husband? c) How satisfied are you with your husband's help around home? d) How satisfied are you with the time you and your husband spend just talking? The responses--very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied--were given respective values from 4 to 1.

The marital satisfaction score is the sum of the values of her responses to the four items. No score was derived if any one of the questions was not answered. Possible scores ranged from 4 to 16. Only the maximum score of 16 was labeled as "high satisfaction," because there was a tendency in all states for the majority of responses to concentrate in the "very satisfied" category. Scores between 4 and 8, indicating dissatisfaction on the majority of items, were classified as "low marital satisfaction." The remaining scores (9-15) were classified as "medium marital satisfaction."

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9) Value Orientations to Education and Employment: Abstractness-Concreteness, Control-Fatalism, Equalitarianism-Authoritarianism, Integration-Alienation.

The value orientation of the respondents along the themes listed above were examined with regard to both education and employment. These two areas were chosen as the foci because they were seen as important to improvement of the respondents' standard of living.

Ten items delineated each of the value themes. In each case five of the items concerned values in the area of education, and five concerned values in the area of employment. The scoring of each item within a particular theme ranged from 1 to 5, as follows: a) abstractness (1)--concreteness (5); b) control (1)--fatalism (5); c) equalitarianism (1)--authoritarianism (5); d) integration (1)--alienation (5). For each of the four value themes, a respondent's mean score on education items and on employment items was then calculated (mean score = sum of score on each item/5). The mean scores also ranged from 1 to 5 in the same manner as the items within the theme. For comparison, the mean scores on each value theme were divided as nearly as possible into thirds.

A) Abstractness-Concreteness:

Education orientation:

1) It is more important to take training which leads to a job than to take art, drama, or music lessons, which do not.
2) The best education trains for a job.
3) It is a waste of time for people who have little talent in an area to take lessons, for example, art.
4) The main reason for getting an education is personal satisfaction.
5) Keeping the house clean is more important than reading.

Employment orientation:

1) The amount of work done on a job is more important than how well you do the job.
2) It is important to do a job you can be proud of even if it is more than the boss expects.
3) A person should leave a job he likes for a job he does not like if it pays more money.
4) Getting along with other workers is more important than the pay you get.
5) Pay is more important in choosing a job than what the job is.

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B) Control-Fatalism:

Education orientation:

1) Some people just cannot finish high school, so why try.

2) If the family needs more money it is all right for a child to quit school and help out for a while.

3) It is important for children to get an education no matter what it costs.

4) It is all right to drop out of high school if more money is needed to buy clothing for the family.

5) It is all right to drop out of high school if the student isn't interested.

Employment orientation:

1) The most important thing about getting a job is being at the right place at the right time.

2) Most people can expect a better job some time.

3) It helps to get ahead in a job if you learn more about it.

4) It makes no difference which job you take because you are likely to get laid off anyway.

5) In getting a job it is not what you know but who you know.

C) Equalitarianism-Authoritarianism:

Education orientation:

1) The man with an education is more respected than an uneducated man.

2) The best reason for getting an education is so you can be equal to others.

3) It is important for a child to have respect for his teacher.

4) It is more important for a boy to get an education beyond high school than for a girl.

5) It is important for a girl to get an education beyond high school.

Employment orientation:

1) It is a good idea to have more women as bosses on the job.

2) It is all right for women to hold jobs that are usually men's jobs.

3) It is all right for a woman to work outside the home just because she likes to.

4) It would be a good idea to have more young people, than we now have, as bosses.

5) The man should be the one to make all the decisions about choosing his job.

D) Integration-Alienation:

Education orientation:

1) Families can get help with their children's problems from school and other places.
2) When a child has problems there is no use getting in touch with the school because they aren't really interested.
3) Even though it may cause our children to move away to a distant city to get a good job, they need to get a good education.
4) People are better accepted by others if they have an education or job training.
5) Parents and children don't get along as well when the children have more education than the parents.

Employment orientation:

1) Too many on the job are just out for themselves and don't really care about anyone else.
2) Few people really look forward to their work.
3) It is easier to get discouraged when others are better on the job.
4) A good job makes a person want to take an interest in his community.
5) Friends and relatives can give the best information about jobs.

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FINDINGS

Who They Are

All but one of the respondents in this study were Mexican or of Mexican origin. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents were born in Mexico and 75% of their husbands were born there. This indicates that they tend to be recent immigrants to the U.S. Further, 78% claim Mexican citizenship (higher than the proportion born in Mexico). One reason might be that some women born in the U.S., being married to Mexican men, now claim Mexican citizenship.

The homemakers ranged in age from 17 to 61, with a mean age of 34 (see Chart I). The large majority (89%) had never been to high school, and 50% had never gone past the fourth grade. Nearly half (41%) had worked during the past year. All but two worked as unskilled household or farm laborers.

The husbands, ranging in age from 19 to 62, with a mean age of 38 (see Chart II), resemble the wives in scant education. Ninety-one percent never went to high school and over half (53%) had never gone past the fourth grade. Almost all had been employed during the past year (98%). Like the wives, the husbands were employed mostly as unskilled household and farm laborers. This large concentration of both men and women in low-level jobs is partially accounted for by the fact that 94% of both husbands and wives had never had any job-training. The rest is probably accounted for by their immigrant status, lack of education, and difficulty with the English language.

The families tended to be large (3 to 13 persons). The mean number of persons per family was 5.9, although 4 was the number found most commonly. The overwhelming majority of these families (93%) were two-parent nonextended families. The rest, with two exceptions, were two-parent extended families.

Summary: Overall, these are uneducated and untrained adults from a foreign country trying, through work as unskilled laborers, to support families that are large by U.S. standards.

Where They Live

Because farm laborers migrate, one tends to imagine them as forever on the move, traveling from one camp and one harvest to the next, never settling down. That is not so. Most (94%) of those studied have a permanent home to which they return at the end of each annual harvest season. Although the conditions in many migrant camps are primitive, very little is known about their permanent homes. What are they like?

Although some migrant families have no permanent home, most do (N = 158). A few (2%) occupy those homes without charge, but most either rent (43%) or own (or are buying) their homes (55%). The number of rooms ranges from 1 to 7 (mean 3.5). The number of rooms per

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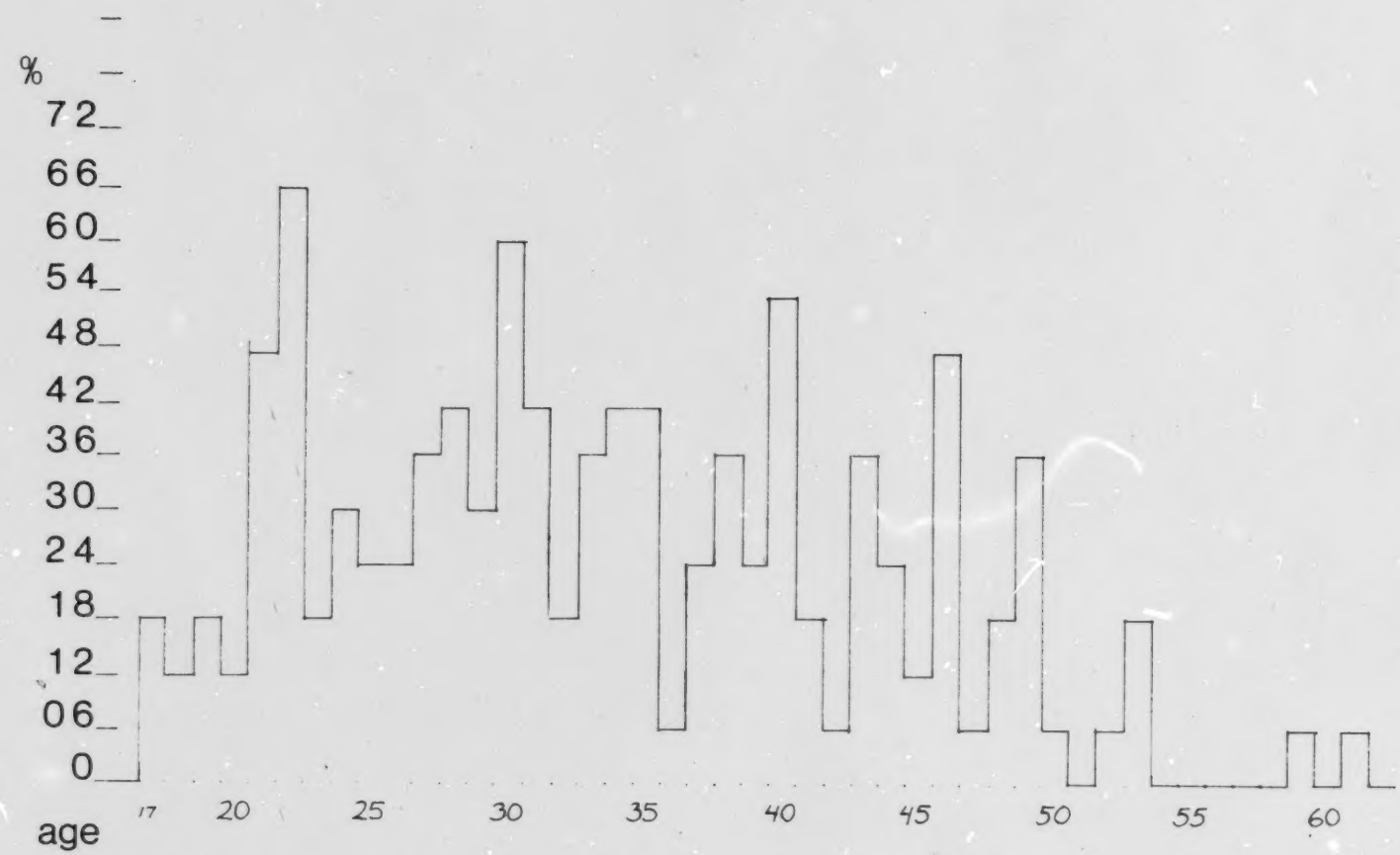
I. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



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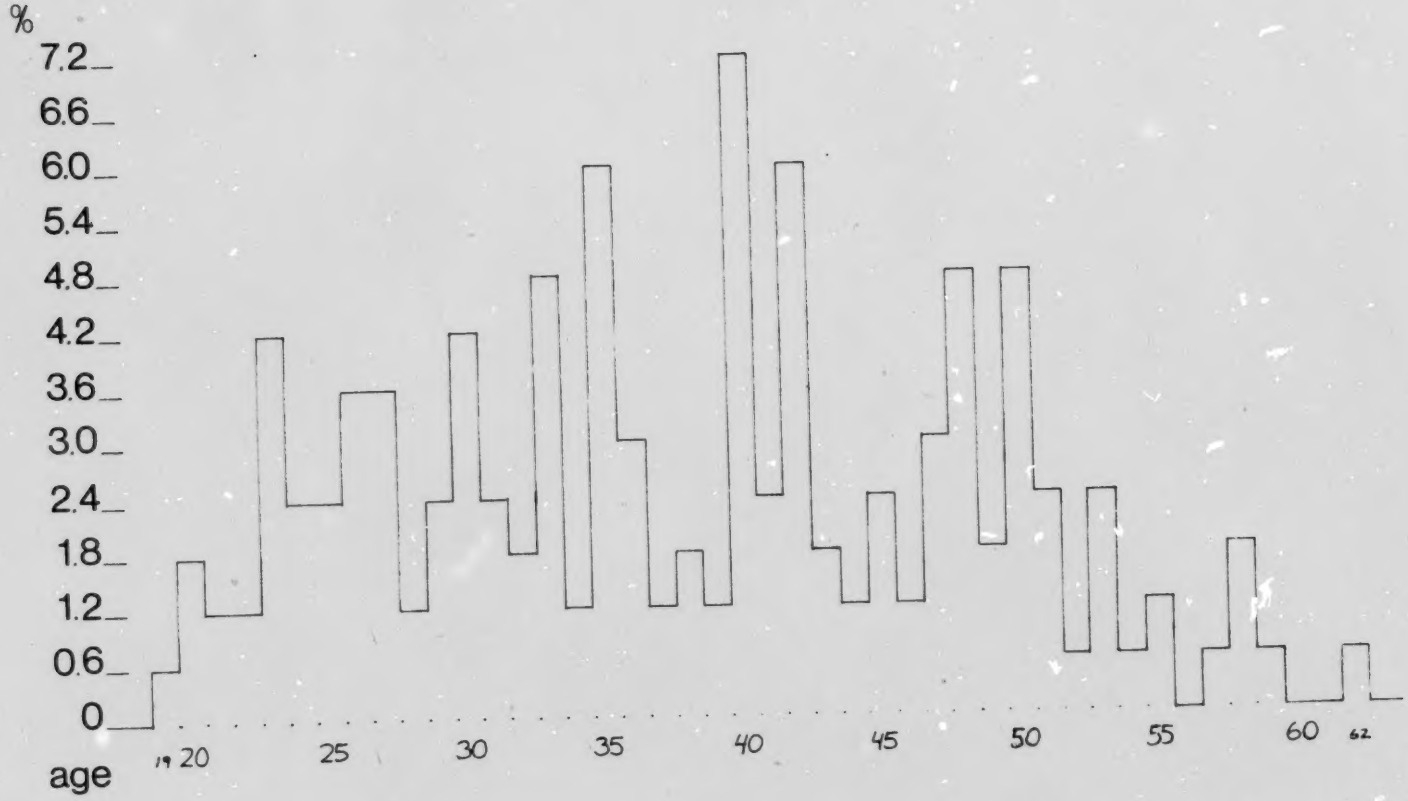
II. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HUSBANDS



capita was 0.6 (only 8 families had more rooms than people). Privacy in such homes is doubtless minimal. Facilities within many of these homes were also minimal by middle-class standards. Only 83% of the families had indoor plumbing, and of these 37% had only cold running water. Thus, nearly half the homes had either no plumbing or only cold water. Flush toilets were present in 58% of the homes, and 66% of the families had a bath or shower in their homes. Half the families (51%) had garbage collection, and just over half neither had nor could be reached by telephone.

Even so, most respondents expressed satisfaction with their homes in general (74%) and 83% felt that the room in their homes was at least enough.

Summary: These people live in what most would consider substandard housing, but most respondents appeared satisfied.

Communications with the Outside World

Contact with the "outside" world appears slight. One reason may be the difference in language. Most speak Spanish in their homes (70%), and in only one home was English the only spoken language. The rest of the families spoke both Spanish and English.

As pointed out in the previous section, more than half the respondents (54%) were not accessible by telephone and only 16% actually had a telephone in their home. There was little use of other channels of communication (except TV and the church). In most of the homes no one read a newspaper daily (63% did not), but there was a working television in 78% of the homes.*

The migrants tended not to participate in formal organizations other than the church. In 85% of the homes either the husband or the wife (and most commonly both) went to church regularly. But in approximately 1/2 the cases neither spouse regularly attended other types of organizations (church groups, community groups, lodges, recreation groups, and job-connected groups). The respective percentages of nonattendance were 51, 49, 52, 56, and 53.

Participation in formal organizations is not the only way of participating in the larger society. The web of day-to-day interactions with friends and neighbors is also important. Here too, however, the migrants are isolated. Over half (56%) were rated low in neighboring, with only 11% scoring high on the variable that measures interaction with neighbors.

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*In other states in the national project (except Texas, with 11%) no more than 5% of the homes were without a working T.V., compared with California's 22%.

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Summary: These are people cut off from the outside world. How much of this is due to choice and how much to circumstance cannot be determined from the data. Factors that could lead to this isolation include the language barrier, the regular seasonal migration, the lack of education, the strong reliance of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans on their families, their status as newly arrived immigrants, and discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in this country.

Their Income

The conventional wisdom is correct, that migrants are poor. But that does not go far enough in this case: the migrants ranked lowest in the poverty populations in the larger project; they have the least income and many money problems. That cuts them off from the larger society more than the previous information would imply. To avoid isolation, not only does one need to speak the language, to have a job, and to participate either formally or informally with other members of the community, but one also needs the goods and services believed to be necessities by the community. So, money is needed to purchase these things, but the migrants are so close to, perhaps even below, the minimum subsistence level that they are excluded from participation by lack of income besides lack of education and language.

Nearly 2/3 of the California sample made under $4,000. The median income was $3,487. In all other states studied no more than 36% made under $4,000, and the proportion in this category was usually considerably lower. Thus nearly twice as many migrants made under $4,000 as did poor people in other states. Moreover, aside from the population studied in Texas (15%), in all other states at least 1/4 of the population and in rural areas about 1/2 of the population made more than $8,000 per year. In contrast only 11% of the California migrants made this much during the previous year.

A more accurate (and comparative) measure of a family's financial well-being is the income index. This measure takes into account a family's age and sex structure, its size, and the price levels in the area.* An income index of 100 should support consumption on a very strict economy level, a level intended only for emergency use. Families with indices lower than 100 are impoverished even by these strict standards since they are not able to meet minimum levels of subsistence.

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*For a more detailed discussion, see Scales and Measure.

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In California 2/3 of the migrant families had indices of less than 100. These families had income which placed them below the very lowest of poverty thresholds. In other states 1/3 or less (more often less) of the population fell into this category.*

When we turn to who contributed to the family income we see that in over half of the families some members other than the husband contributed to the family income. The respondent herself contributed to the family income in 41% of the cases. In nearly half of the cases in which the respondent worked (N = 70) she contributed between one-fourth and one-half of the total family income. In 16% of the cases in which the respondent worked, she contributed more than 1/2 the income. In addition, in 37% of the cases other people not including the respondent or her husband contributed to the family's earnings. In no other state were other members so important, and yet in no other state were the families so impoverished.

Further, this earned income is very important to the migrant family. In 95% of the families 3/4 or more of their total income was composed of what they earned. Only two families did not depend on their earnings for any of their income in the previous year. As would be expected from a group so isolated from the larger community, very few families received any income from an institutional source such as the armed services or the Welfare Department (see Chart III). In fact, just 13% of the families received income from any source other than their own earnings.

Not only do the migrants make very little money, when we come to assess the dependability of this income** we find (not surprisingly) that none of the migrants had a "steady" income (one received throughout the year and in which the amount remained the same). Most had incomes that were classified as fluctuating (99%) and the rest had incomes classified as not at all dependable.

Summary: We have a picture of families who for the most part cannot meet minimum subsistence needs even though more than one member of the family contributes to the income. Planning is made even more difficult by the fact that the income fluctuates throughout the year. This lack of money raises another barrier between the migrant and society at large.

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*Because some of these families may reside in Mexico when not harvesting the crops and since the income index does not take into account foreign residency, some caution should be exercised in interpreting these results. Our best estimate is that 25% reside in Mexico.

**Cf. Steadiness of Income in Scales and Measures

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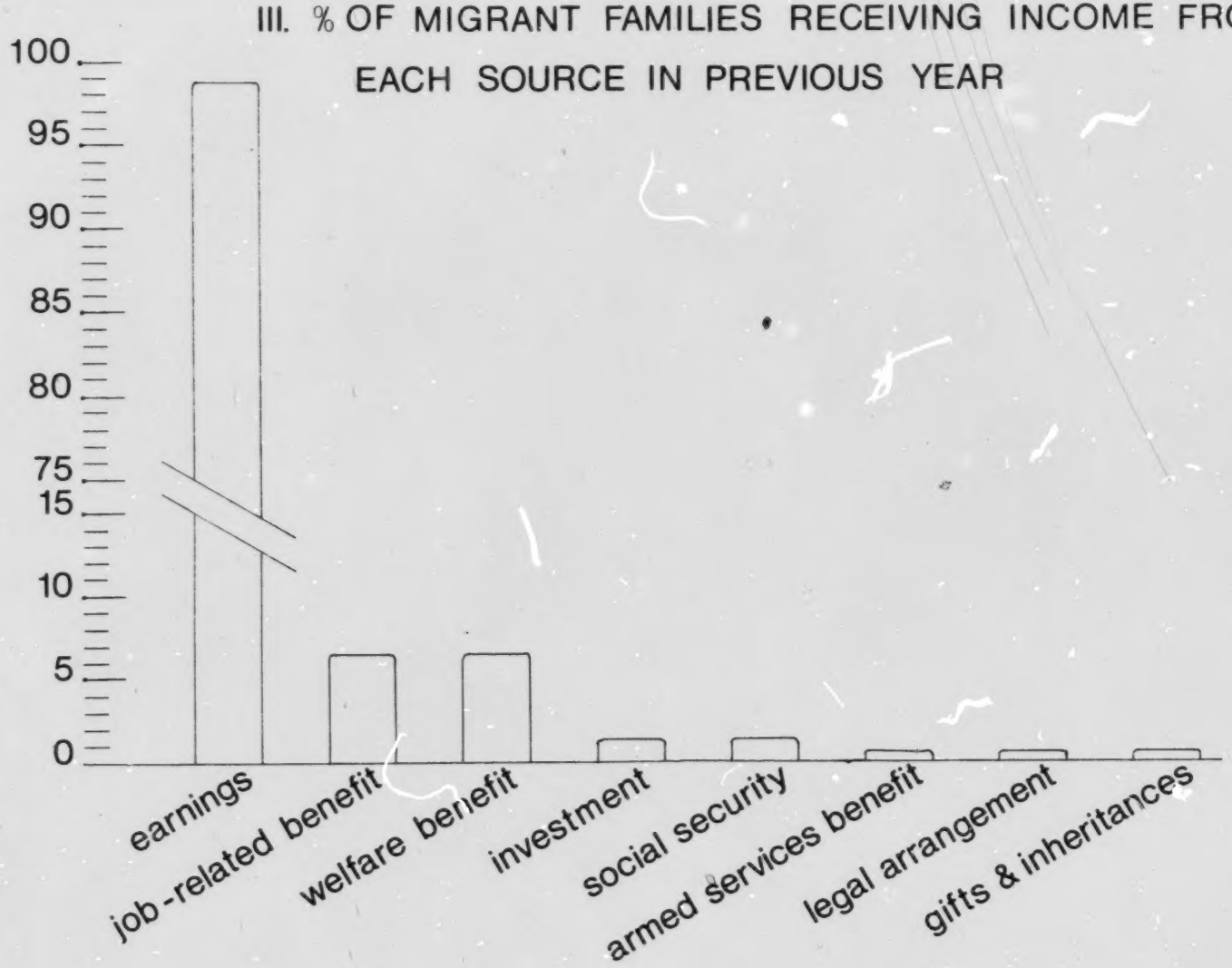
III. % OF MIGRANT FAMILIES RECEIVING INCOME FROM EACH SOURCE IN PREVIOUS YEAR
100
95
90
85
80
75
15
10
5
0
earnings
job-related benefit
welfare benefit
investment
social security
armed services benefit
legal arrangement
gifts & inheritances

The small incomes of farm laborers must be stretched to cover even the necessities of existence (food, clothing, shelter, etc.). Fixed commitments such as rent partially determine the amount left over for the more flexible parts of the budget (food, entertainment). The greater the amount already committed, the greater the problem of meeting other expenses. What types of fixed commitments do migrants have, and what proportion of their total income is so committed?

All of the migrant families (like most families) had commitments to pay regularly for housing and utilities. Other commitments were for credit payments (50%), insurance payments (25%), and church support (24%). Most credit and insurance payments involved a car. Ninety-five percent of the families owned a car. Most of the families had not overcommitted their income. Sixty-one percent committed less than 1/4 of their income, while another 20% had committed between 1/4 and 1/2 of their income. Only 1/10 of the families had committed 75% or more of their income.

Even though the proportion of income committed was not large, money problems were quite frequent. The problems encountered, either sometimes or often (in rank order from least frequently to most frequently), are: losing the money (money is lost); having others spend the money before the respondent could get to it (others spend money); in danger of having utilities shut off (utilities); getting behind on rent or house payments (rent); not having enough food to last until there is money to buy more (food); unable to afford to keep appliances in running order (maintaining appliances); unable to afford new shoes or clothing (clothing); unable to meet large bills (large bills); unable to save something to fall back on (savings); not enough money for doctor, dentist, or medicine (doctor); and unable to buy special things for children (children's things). The percentage of families which encountered each of these problems with some frequency ranged from 16% (for money lost) to 63% (for children s things) (see Chart IV).

Given the above, how adequate did the respondents feel their incomes to be? Nearly 1/3 felt that their incomes were either not at all adequate or that they could meet only necessities. Roughly half (48%) felt they could afford some but not all of what they wanted, and the rest felt they could afford everything they wanted. Thus, most felt that their incomes did not stretch as far as they would like.

In general, respondents tended to feel that their situations had improved over the past. In comparing job opportunities with those five years ago, half felt better off and 11% felt worse off.* Most (66%) felt their family to be better off than five years ago.* A respondent was also asked to compare her family's condition now with that of her parents when they were her age. Here again, most saw improvement. Sixty-two percent felt themselves better off than their parents

*Only families formed for at least 5 years included N = 137.

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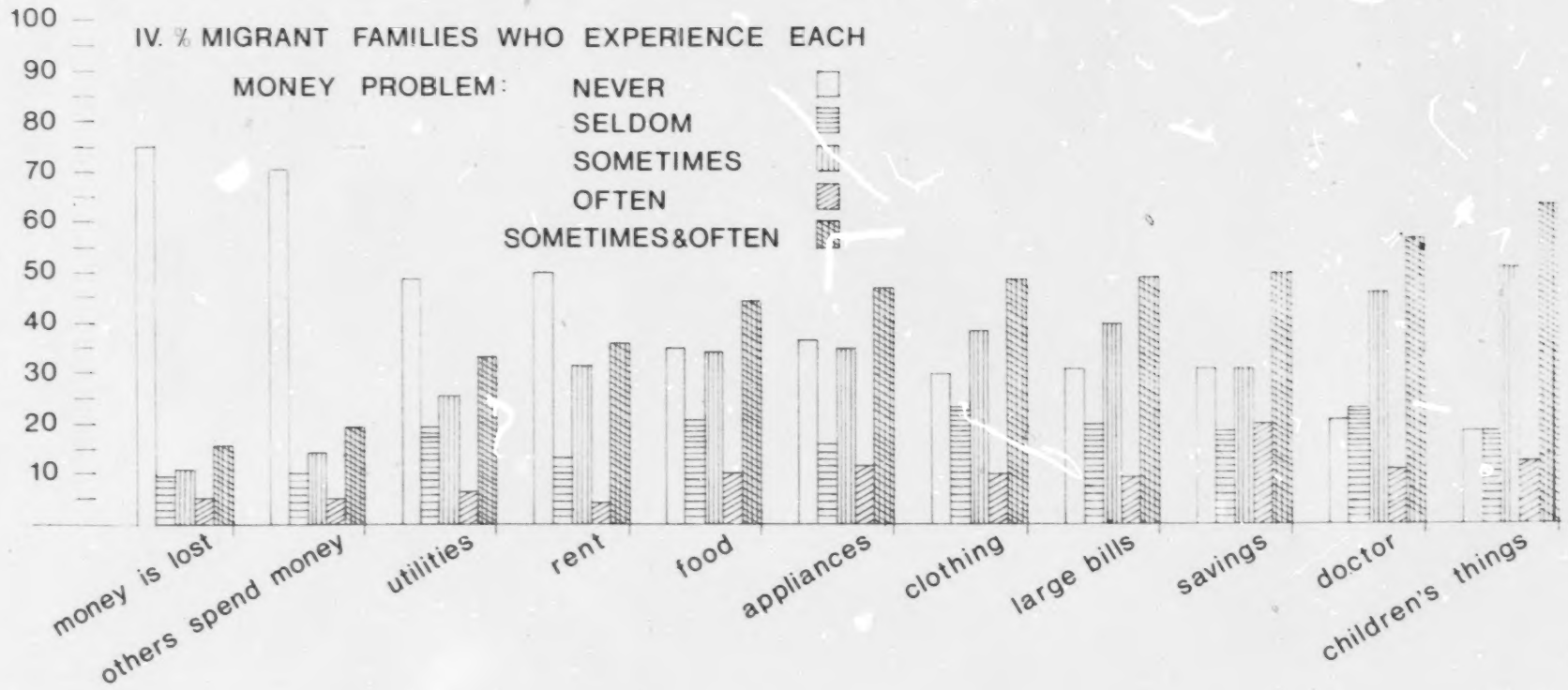
IV. % MIGRANT FAMILIES WHO EXPERIENCE EACH
MONEY PROBLEM:
NEVER
SELDOM
SOMETIMES
OFTEN
SOMETIMES&OFTEN
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
money is lost
others spend money
utilities
rent
food
appliances
clothing
large bills
savings
doctor
children's things

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had been, and 7% felt worse off. The rest saw no difference.

Summary: These are people with frequent money problems. In comparison with populations from the other states studied, the proportion of migrants who encountered each of the listed money problems was, with the exception of savings, either the highest or close to the highest. This comes as no surprise since their total income is so low (considered inadequate by most).

Social Structure of the Family

The stereotype of the Mexican family is one of a very close-knit extended family with a dominant husband, a submissive and saintly wife, and obedient children. How true is this image of the migrant family? The overwhelming majority of the families in this study were two-parent nonextended families (93%). However, this figure alone might be misleading. The majority of homemakers expressed a high kinship orientation (61%).* That is, they would give and look for help from, as well as visit, relatives in preference to others. Further, even though most did not live in an extended family, most (92%) had an extended family orientation.* Such an orientation means that the respondent felt it to be important to arrange her and her family's life in such a way as to encourage extended family relations.

When family cohesiveness is looked at a different picture emerges. Instead of the close-knit family that the above description implies the majority of the families had medium or low cohesiveness. In fact, low cohesiveness was evidenced by more respondents in California than in any other state. One-fourth of the respondents (26%) were rated high in familial cohesiveness. The low cohesiveness of the migrant family is probably due to strict sex-role segregation. The cohesiveness measure was designed to discover how much a family did as a group.* Families in which men and women do not engage in the same activities together would evidence low cohesiveness. It is this latter type of family that is most typical of Mexican culture; and since the migrants tend to be recent immigrants they too may have this kind of family structure.

Mexican culture places emphasis on strict upbringing for the children. That was true of the migrant families also. None of the respondents were permissive in raising their children, and just over half (59%) were nonpermissive. The rest (40%) had a mixed orientation.

Lastly we come to the area of the conjugal power structure. This is divided into two sections: who makes the decision; and who carries out the decision. In most areas the majority of migrant families share the decision-making. (These areas include who decides which friends to visit, how many children the family wants, how to handle the children, and how to spend the money.) Where decision-making in these areas is not shared, the man, not the woman, more commonly makes the decision. This is true only for the California sample. In only two

*Cf. Scales and Measures.

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areas does one partner make the decision in the majority of families, and in these two areas more families leave the decision-making to the husband than to the wife. These two areas are deciding on the best place to live, and whether the wife will work.

When it comes to the area of carrying out the decisions we find that the modal response, again, is one of joint action in all three areas (limiting the number of children, handling the children when both parents are home, and handling money matters). Here again, where the action is left to a single parent, the man more commonly handles these matters.

How does the migrant wife feel about these arrangements? Nearly half (44%) were rated high in marital satisfaction, and 45% were rated medium.

Summary: The stereotype of the migrant family does not jibe with reality. Most migrant families do not live in extended families, although they do feel close to their relatives and try to include them in their lives. Further, the man is not the all-powerful tyrant. Most of the decisions in most of the families were made jointly, and the carrying out of decisions was also done jointly in most families.

Value Orientations

Past researchers have found certain attitudes correlated with poverty. They have found that the poor tend to be more authoritarian, more fatalistic, more alienated, and more concerned with the tangible products of action than with abstract ideas. How true are these orientations for the California migrants?*

The first value theme is concreteness versus abstractness. The migrants tend to be concerned with the concrete products of education and employment rather than with any other values inherent in them. About 64% of the migrant homemakers were at the high end of the continuum in education, and 10% were at the high end of the continuum in employment. This is quite a difference. However, both these proportions are the maximum for any state studied in this project. It is interesting that poor people in general are concerned more with the concrete properties of education and the abstract qualities of jobs. Given the questions that were asked to determine this rating, this probably means that these people are concerned with qualities other than the pay of their work situation, while education is looked upon as a means to getting better jobs,**

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*Because education and employment are considered basic to bringing about changes in the standard of living for impoverished families, the respondents' values in these two areas were examined.

**Cf. Scales and Measures.

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which is a view held by many in our culture. The proportion of people scoring at the high end of the continuum in the various states ranged from 15% to 64% in education, and from 0% to 10% in employment. Thus, the concern of the respondents with payment for working and concrete means for getting a better job tended to be higher in California than in other states. This is perhaps caused by the fact that they are so much poorer in both absolute and relative terms than the poor of other states.

The next area of value orientation is that of control versus fatalism. To score at the control end of the continuum would mean that a person believed he had control over the events in his life. Conversely, a fatalistic attitude indicates a belief that events are inevitable and cannot be changed by the individual. Here again, the migrants lead all other states by having the highest proportions with a fatalistic attitude. In the area of education, 62% were fatalistic whereas 10% felt they had some control. In employment not even 1% believed they had any control, and 78% believed in accepting the inevitible. The proportions with fatalistic attitudes in the various states range from 15% to 62% in education and 35% to 78% in employment.

This fatalistic attitude of the migrants reflects the little control they do exercise over their own lives. Their employment largely depends on weather, the crops, and acts of God. They also depend on a boss (the owner) whom they do not see and to whom they cannot communicate their grievances, and they depend on foremen and labor contractors whose whims and excesses must be accepted. Migrant workers cannot manipulate these people or circumstances. They can control the foreman no more than they can control the weather, for few are unionized and they have no way of bringing pressure to bear. Educational institutions are also hard to manipulate by people who don't speak the language, are poor, and on the move for half the year. All of these circumstances lead to and reinforce a fatalistic attitude.

The third dimension studied was one of equalitarianism versus authoritarianism. Those with an equalitarian attitude believe that all men are intrinsically equal, while those who are authoritarian emphasize obedience, respect for authority, and family loyalty. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are usually portrayed as authoritarians. Their authoritarian attitudes are often connected and seen as arising from a family structure which is father-dominated, stressing strict child-rearing methods and emphasizing obedience to the will and dictates of authority figures.* Since most of the

*Cf. Ramirez, M. (1967: 3-11).

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migrants were Mexican or of Mexican descent, one might expect them to be highly authoritarian. Such is not the case. In both education and employment, the proportion of respondents expressing a strong authoritarian attitude in California ranked midway among the states surveyed. This is not to say that no one held such attitudes. In education 28% were at the authoritarian end of the scale, but 18% were at the equalitarian end. In employment, 32% expressed authoritarian attitudes and almost an equal number (28%) expressed equalitarian attitudes. The proportions with authoritarian attitudes in all the states ranged from 14% to 42% in education and from 20% to 52% in employment.

The last area of belief studied was that of alienation versus integration. One who feels integrated feels in harmony with society or the environment. Alienation is the feeling of being at variance with one's society. Alienation has been variously described by such terms as a feeling of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and anomie. The migrants, isolated from the outside world, again lead all the other states in having the highest proportions of people at the alienation end of the continuum in both education and employment. In employment, 74% were alienated and only 6% expressed a feeling of integration. In education, however, a curious finding emerged; while 34% feel alienated (the highest of any state), 28% feel integrated into the system. Only in three other states did a larger proportion of the population express feelings of integration with the system.

Perhaps the explanation for this anomaly lies in a recent paper by Wright, Salinas and Kuvlesky (1972). They described the aspirations of Chicano, Black, and White high school students and found that they all have very high aspirations and, further, expect to achieve these aspirations through the legitimate means of our society--education. Unfortunately, Chicano students probably do not have much chance of success, because of the present structure of society. Thus the migrant population may express both alienation and integration with the educational systems, some seeing it as a means to enter society, whereas others see the quest as hopeless.

Summary: The migrants as a group were the most fatalistic, alienated, and concerned with concrete properties of action of any of the populations studied in the larger project. They were not extremely authoritarian.

Conclusions

What, then, does it mean to be a migrant worker in California? It means you are most likely an immigrant from Mexico, an ambitious person seeking a better life for

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yourself and your immediate family by going to a new country, leaving behind your country, your friends and relatives, and familiar surroundings. It means you are a worker in one of the most badly paid areas of employment in this country. It means you live in substandard housing and have little money. It means you have trouble dealing with the larger community because you speak the language poorly. It means you are uneducated and unskilled. It means you are on the road for months every year. It means you can be just about any age. It means you are discriminated against. It means you are likely to have trouble with the Border Patrol. It means you feel alienated and without control over your life. Mostly it means you are isolated, a marginal person on the outside looking in.

Today the conditions of agriculture are changing radically and the need for the unskilled migrant worker is decreasing as machines replace him in the harvest. And yet the migrant is still with us, whether or not we ignore him and his family. What is needed is to make him a part of the larger society; to see that he is represented by the political institutions of this country; to see that he and his children acquire the education they need to make it in today's world; to see that he is paid a wage on which he and his family can live. This report cannot indicate the best way of accomplishing these things but merely points to the needs.

And yet, in trying to improve the lot to the migrant, one is likely to encounter problems arising from the differences between the migrant's world and that of the larger society. Much of the following discussion is taken from the work of Dorothy Nelkin in her book On the Season.

Middle-class people live in a world over which they have a lot of control; a rational world obeying laws of cause and effect. Migrant workers, in contrast, live in a world that is unpredictable, where one's action today has very little to do with what happens to one tomorrow. The crops may be good one week and nonexistent the next, or the foreman or crewleader may cheat you out of your pay. In either case the migrant has no control over it, and no way of predicting it.

Because migrants see little relation between their actions and the consequences, they look upon their problems as insoluble. The adjustment they make to such a situation is not to engage in rational goal-oriented behavior, since this requires confidence in cause and effect and the ability to change things; instead, they try to relieve the immediate situation by whatever means comes easily to hand. The acts

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in which they engage may seem irrational or shiftless, but this is not so when we realize the reality they live in is one very different from our own, and that the acts they engage in have pay-offs in the world in which they live.

What this means in terms of changing the condition in which they live and work is that actions which appear logical and useful to middle-class people may not seem so to the migrants themselves. In other words, actions which are sensible in a world in which cause and effect are assumed to operate are not necessarily so sensible in a world in which one has no control over one's own life and cause and effect do not appear to operate in any predictable way. This latter is the reality in which migrants live. Therefore, reform efforts must be explained and made useful to the migrants from the beginning. The migrants must see some pay-off for themselves before one can hope to gain their participation or support.

The migrants are isolated from the mainstream of on-going society. They are isolated for several reasons. Many do not speak the language, or have enough money to buy the goods and services we consider necessary for participation. They are also faced with discrimination. They are further isolated because, as just shown, they do not share the reality of the larger society. The reforms most needed by the migrants are those which would make them part of our society. This would probably entail structural changes in the lives of the migrants and those with whom they interact.

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Appendix A

A Description of the Samples for the Remaining Twelve States of the Larger Project

The areas studied in the larger project were basically of three types: a) rural small places of 1,000 to 2,499 populations; b) sections of metropolitan areas with relatively high proportions of low-income or otherwise disadvantaged families; and c) special populations (of which the California migrants are one example).

The samples were classified as rural or urban according to the definitions used by the U.S. Census Bureau. The samples in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska were from small rural places. These were incorporated areas with populations of at least 1,000 but less than 2,500. The samples in Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Nevada, Ohio, and Wisconsin were collected from lower-income areas of urban places for which a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area is named. The Vermont sample was composed of farm families (17%) and families living in the open country but not farming (83%). The Texas sample was divided between black nonfarm families residing in the open country (20%) and blacks from an urban community of less than 5,000 persons (80%). The California sample consisted of migrant workers.

Usable interviews collected in the thirteen states totaled 2,650. Seven hundred and twenty-two of these were from small rural places, 1,283 were from the relatively poor districts in urban areas, 259 were from black families in Texas, and 217 were from Vermont. California collected 169 usable interviews.

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